

# LET'S DIY!



## Tips and Tricks on organizing zine workshops





Dear Diary,

Things to do today:

1. get typewriter
2. find some recycled paper
3. look for my favourite pen
4. start an information riot

d.i.y.

zine workshops.



<http://gzagg.org>

GRRRL ZINES A-GO-GO

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# LET'S DIY! TIPS AND TRICKS ON HOW YOU CAN ORGANIZE ZINE WORKSHOPS

by Grrrl Zines A-Go-Go

Since the beginning of the women's movement, feminists have spread the word about zines through grass-roots magazines, pamphlets and flyers in order to gain groundbreaking rights such as voting and schooling. Grrrl zines represent a continuation of this long tradition of feminist alternative publishing.

In 1991 when the riot grrrl movement emerged out of the alternative and punk music scene in the United States, thousands of young women began to produce zines with explicitly feminist themes. Zines became essential outlet for grrrl and queer youth to express themselves publicly about issues like rape, sexual abuse, coming out and eating disorders. They followed the slogan "the personal is political". Zines became an empowering tool for adolescent girls and women to criticize the distorted image of women in mainstream media, traditional gender roles, violence against women, daily discrimination and sexism. Nowadays, they are frequently referred to as "grrrl zines" because they focus on girls' and women's' experiences. Many of them have found a place on the internet and are available as e-zines, often serving as resource and network sites. Importantly, zines cannot be viewed separately from broader community in which they prosper. The vibrant – now international – zine network involves distributors (distros), mailing lists, message boards, zine festivals, conferences, picnics, traveling exhibits, and much more.

As diverse as zines are in form, content and distribution, they share most significantly the ethics of "Do It Yourself" (DIY). The origin of DIY as an alternative, counter-cultural and anti-commercial philosophy was not invented by punk – as it is widely assumed – but by French left artists and intellectuals in the 1950s and 1960s. The main mission of DIY is to stop consuming and start producing and to encourage other to become active. It has been best said by Sarah Dyer, creator of *Action Girl Comics*:

*And please, take the "action" in Action Girl to heart - action of any kind! Do all those things you've been wanting to ! Whether it's a big or little thing, taking control of your life and doing things can really make you feel better about yourself. Start a band, start recycling, start a new hobby. Teach yourself how to*



*do something interesting or fun. Do whatever you want  
- just do! (Action Girl #1)*

Grrrl Zines A-Go-Go [[www.gzagg.org](http://www.gzagg.org)] - the name reflects the attitude that we want to encourage, both within the group and in the dynamic zine and book-making workshops they organize. Grrrl Zines A-Go-Go works with community groups and nonprofit organizations in the San Diego area, conducting workshops for adults and teens. Our primary focus is on the empowerment of teenage girls through the production of zines and artist books.

Formed in 2002, the instigator of the group was Elke Zobl, founder of the Grrrl Zine Network [[grrrlzines.net/index.htm](http://grrrlzines.net/index.htm)]. As a visiting graduate student from Austria, Elke networked with local zinesters in San Diego. She hooked up with Margarat Nee, creator of *Oya* and *Radical Pet* [[margaratnee.com](http://margaratnee.com)], *Glue Magazine's* Claudia Lucero, Kim Schwenk, creator of *Grrrl Noire*, and *Wives Tale's* editrix Britton Neubacher and more recently, Ari Perezdiez, distro owner for "Housewifexcore" [[www.freewebs.com/housewifexcore/](http://www.freewebs.com/housewifexcore/)] and editrix of *Metasynderyne* zine. Now five years old, the group has already initiated over 20 workshops and events, starting with the S/he Collective's [[www.theshecollective.org](http://www.theshecollective.org)] Army of S/he Festival and the Bookmobile Project [[mobilivre.org](http://mobilivre.org)], a showcase of local zinesters, book artists, and independent publishers. Recent activities include a zine exhibit and workshops at the Women's History Museum and Education Center of San Diego.

Grrrl Zines A-Go-Go doesn't just want to encourage zine making, we also hope to inspire other groups of like-minded individuals to start running workshops in their areas too. These sorts of workshops are easy to put on as long as you have a few people willing to share the responsibility of getting resources together and share their interest in self-expression with others.

Grrrl Zines A-Go-Go stays energized by keeping it simple, and by working in a variety of circumstances. Currently three members, the group remains small to ease communication and organizing. We also work with other DIY groups in San Diego like the S/he Collective and The Independent Media Center, as well as out-of-town visitors like The Bookmobile Project. We've also worked in the academic world, helping San Diego State University develop their West Coast Zine Archive. These varied interactions provide fresh energy and perspectives, and offer new venues to infiltrate with our DIY ethic.



This DIY ethic is the cornerstone of the political aspect of Grrrl Zines A-Go-Go. We believe zine-making embodies the phrase "the personal is political" by encouraging active participation in the creation of one's own culture, and independence from mainstream media. This is especially important for teen girls who discover a new avenue for expression that is uncensored; something that they can produce alone, without the need for experts or expensive tools – their tools are their mind and a pen – anyone can do it. It is a truly democratic form of media, everyone who reads a zine can create one. Every reader should be a writer, and zines make this possible, removing the fear of writing and emphasizing the process for each person.

While there is a political motive to the group's activities, we also like to enjoy ourselves, hosting "Zine Picnics" as get-togethers that inevitably produce a collaborative zine by the attendees. Our "Go-Go" attitude is also evident in the workshop process, in which our favorite moment is watching people dive into the "Scrap Lounge" and start cutting, pasting, and writing. We bring manual typewriters as well, sometimes having to help the young girls use the archaic but very handy device.

Most workshops culminate in the production of a compilation zine in which each participant has designed a single page. The resulting publication represents a unique moment in time, a collection of ideas that run the gamut from profane to poetic. We have learned to expect the unexpected, as junior high girls produce moving pages of text and imagery, confirming the need for just this kind of creative activity for the youth of today.

**So how can you start a zine workshop group yourself? Here are a few tips and tricks from Grrrl Zines A Go-Go:**

#### Forming and organizing the group:

Find other like-minded zinesters in your city (via word-of-mouth, the library, co-ops, zines at book and record stores, music venues, and the Internet). It is best if you have enough members so that you can rotate in providing workshops (we like to have at least 2-3 at each workshop). Make small flyers to distribute around town, or at events.

Organize your workshop tools. We always bring: a typewriter (or three, depending on the size of the group), plenty of scissors (try the 99 cent store), glue sticks, and pens (ball point and sharpie), blank paper, a stapler (a long-reach stapler is best), and scrap boxes with a variety of magazines, clip art, copies out of graphic books, rub-on



letters, decorative paper, string, and other bits that can be used in making a zine. You can ask for donations, or "borrow" stuff from work. You may need to "clean up" your scrap for young audiences to make them G rated.

Identify organizations interested in zine workshops such as youth, women's and LGBT centers, feminist organizations, high schools, girls clubs, festivals, bookstores, recovery programs, etc.

Present your idea about doing a zine workshop at the selected venue. Asking your friends is often a good way to get started. Ask if the venue can provide some compensation or contribution of materials, and if it can provide a photocopy machine or free copies. Making copies on a small desktop copier is much slower than on a full-size copier, and can put a crimp in your plans, so be sure to clarify exactly what they have available so you can plan.

When arranging for spaces for the workshop make sure it has enough tables and chairs, and that it allows cut and paste activities.

Decide on a time frame for the workshop. We usually allow 1.5 to 2 hours for the workshop itself and another hour for copying and stapling the workshop zine. One hour alone isn't enough time for you to talk and for folks to work, so don't get squeezed.

If the workshop is open to the public (and not only for a specific group), make flyers and distribute them widely in the community and among your friends. Make use of activist email lists and website in your community too. You should probably keep the number of participants under 20.

### The workshop itself:

First introduce yourselves and your zines (or if you don't do your own zine, what your interest in zines is about), and talk about why you got started in zines. Next talk about the definition of a zine (ask the crowd for an answer to get them involved), zine history, the current "zine scene," your experience making and distributing zines, and the basics of how to make and distribute zines (distribution and how to find zines always gets lots of questions). It's best to have a resource guide available (a zine itself is great) that repeats some of this material so people have something to take with them, rather than trying to write stuff down.



Most of our workshops consist of making a zine in which each participant contributes one page. We make digest-sized zines, which are letter-size paper folded in two (so that each page is 4.25" wide by 5.5" tall). This style makes a nice "snapshot" of the group, especially if it's part of a themed event, and people like taking home a zine with everyone's work in it. If you aren't going to be able to make all the copies needed you can also consider having each person do a zine out of a single sheet of paper (folded in eighths, with a slit – look online for directions), which they can copy later on their own.

It's usually a good idea to suggest a theme for the zine to help them get started. We have found a clear theme to be essential for youth workshops, because unless they have brought written work with them (as part of a creative writing class for instance), they will spend too much time wondering what to do (since schools don't encourage free thinking these days). Theme will be an integral part of some workshops, such as with people in a recovery program, so in some cases you'll need to discuss this carefully beforehand. Sometimes the theme can be inspired by the setting, such as a museum.

Before they get started you should talk about the technical issues of photocopying, such as margins, and converting color to grayscale. Bring examples to show. We suggest you have them draw a border approximately one-half inch around their page as a guide, so that their work doesn't get cut off when copied. Be sure to point out that color can be tricky when making black-and-white copies (red becomes black, for example), and encourage image-making that will copy well. Discourage pages with a majority of solid black as this tends to create paper jams when copied.

Then it's DIY time! It's important to allot the majority of the time for them to work on their page. It can take some people a while to get comfortable, and some do multiple versions. It's a good idea to chat with them about what they're working on, especially if it seems like they're stuck. Your feedback can get them thinking about their idea with a fresh perspective, or will simply help validate their ideas as worth writing about. Be prepared to show people how to use the typewriters ("smack the key hard!" is the first tip), as most have never used them. Since mistakes are often made while typing, encourage them to leave in the mistakes, or just cross them out – we think this adds character to the typed pages, and will speed up the process and eliminate frustration. While work is in progress, the organizers can make a cover (use graphics from the event or venue), an ad page for your group (and for any upcoming events – this a good way to balance out the number of pages if you need to) and a contributor's



page (just a blank space where everyone can sign their name). Have them sign the contributor's page when they turn in their page, and allow them to identify themselves as they wish, but do suggest email addresses if they wish to keep in contact with your or other workshop participants.

Assemble the master copy of the zine as pages are submitted to demonstrate how this is done. They will give you a half-sheet of paper, which you will then glue onto a creased full sheet of paper. Do consider the order of pages when you do this, and try to juxtapose contributions in an interesting manner.

Before the workshop ends ask the participants to sign up for a mailing list if they want to be informed about future events.

Remember that you may not have a copy machine immediately available, in which case you will need to make arrangements for getting the zines to the workshop participants. If your workshop is part of a conference or festival, try to schedule it early in the day so that you can arrange a pick-up point for them later. You may need to provide envelopes for mailing, so you may want to ask for postage costs from either the participant or the organization sponsoring the workshop. Sometimes it works out for participants to go with you to make copies, which is a great way for them to learn about copy techniques and get their zines right away.

When copying a zine with lots of images, select the "photo" or "photo/text" button on the copy machine for best quality of gray tones. To staple the zine it's easiest to use a long-reach stapler (one designed to reach in to the center of paper). If you need to use a regular stapler: make a pile of newspaper, open the zine face down on top of it, open the stapler and staple down through the zines spine, then manually fold down the ends of the staples.

Voilà! The zine is ready to go! Have a file folder handy for storing the master (aka the "flat"), and archive it in your group files along with a copy (and remember to make an extra to donate to a local zine library!).

If you would like more tips on working with other community organizations, get the brand new *Let's DIY II*, our new zine on collaboration and planning.





### Online resources:

Grrrl Zines A-Go-Go  
[gzagg.org]

Grrrl Zine Network by Elke Zobl  
[grrrlzines.net]

Margarat Nee, GZAGG member  
[margaratnee.com]

Housewifexcore Distro  
[www.freewebs.com/housewifexcore/]

The Bookmobile Project  
[mobilivre.org]

San Diego Independent Media Center  
[sandiego.indymedia.org]

West Coast Zine Archive at San Diego State University  
[infodome.sdsu.edu/about/depts/spcollections/  
rarebooks/zinesfindingaid.shtml]

Zinewiki  
[zinewiki.com]

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Email us!!! [info@gzagg.org](mailto:info@gzagg.org)

And join our mailing list!!

[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/grrrlzines\\_a\\_go\\_go](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/grrrlzines_a_go_go)

San Diego, 2006

**Quick and Easy**



**9148**  
SIZES  
S—24—25  
M—26—28  
L—30—32

**9213**  
SIZES  
12—20  
30—42

**9093**  
SIZES  
14½—24½

**9148**—Make this wrap-around skirt in a jiffy, wear it with all your separates. No fitting problems. Waist sizes small 24-25; medium 26-28; large 30-32. Medium size takes 3¼ yards 35-inch fabric.

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Send THIRTY-FIVE CENTS (in coins) for each pattern to:  
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